

Absolutes and Absolute Phrases

DEFINITION:

An **absolute** is a noun or pronoun followed by a participle (an “ing” or “ed” verb form.)

An **absolute phrase** is a group of words consisting of a noun or pronoun, a participle, and any related modifiers.

EXAMPLES:

Absolutes-

Heart pounding, the young man knelt and proposed marriage to his sweetheart.
↑
(noun + participle = absolute)

Absolute Phrase

His heart pounding with fear, the young man proposed marriage to his sweetheart.
↑
(absolute + modifiers = absolute phrase)

NOTES:

- Absolute phrases can be long. Look at the example below.

Their minds whirling from the avalanche of information provided by their teacher, the students made their way thoughtfully to the parking lot.

- Absolutes or absolute phrases can be in series.

His head pounding, his hands shaking, his heart filled with trepidation, the young man knelt and proposed marriage to his sweetheart.

- Absolutes or absolute phrases can come anywhere in the sentence.

The two lovers walked through the garden, **their faces reflecting the moonlight, their arms twined about each other, their footsteps echoing in the stillness of the night.**

- Absolutes are always set off with commas or dashes.
- Absolutes must be connected to a full sentence because they are not a sentence by themselves.
- Usually an absolute phrase could be a complete sentence if you added a helping verb